GOLF PUTT TRAINING DEVICE

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to United States provisional patent application number 60/442,749, which was filed on January 28, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The subject invention relates to a golf putt training device of the type used to improve a golfer's ability to properly align a golf club, a golf ball and a target during a putting stroke.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0003] Various devices exist in the art that are devoted specifically to improving a golfer's put. Such devices typically include a pair of spaced-apart guides that extend parallel to one another. To use the device, a golfer aligns the guides with a hole or other intended target. The golfer then places a golf ball between the guides and uses the guides as a visual aid to align the ball with the intended target.

[0004] Although the guides used in prior training devices provide a way for golfers to visually align golf balls during a putt, the devices are cumbersome and difficult to store. One such device, the invention disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,011,154 ("Bowen"), attempts to address this issue by providing a putting practice device that incorporates elongate, flexible guides capable of being moved between extended and retracted positions.

Like the guides used in conventional measuring tapes, the Bowen guides are spring-biased and automatically retract to assume a coiled position within respective housings. Because the guides recoil, the Bowen device is easy to store; however, the device is difficult to use because the guides are not designed to stay in an extended position. Unless some type of anchor is used, the force applied by the springs on the Bowen guides exceeds the combined weight of the guide and the static friction force, which in turn causes the guides to inadvertently retract.

[0005] Although Bowen attempts to solve this problem by inserting a golf tee or pin through the extended end of each guide, this solution is inadequate because it requires a golfer to always have tees or suitable pins on hand. Even when a golfer manages to locate tees, extend the guides and properly secure the guides to the ground, the tiny tees are often insufficient to overcome the biasing force of the spring — the guides end up recoiled inside the housings.

[0006] Prior training aids that utilize spaced-apart guides lack adequate anchors for keeping the guides in an extended position. Thus, there remains an opportunity for a golf putt training device to be provided that preserves the advantages of spring-biased guides, yet eliminates the inconvenient tendency of such guides to suddenly recoil during use.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION AND ADVANTAGES

[0007] The subject invention provides a training device for putting a golf ball. The training device includes a pair of spaced guides. Each guide has a proximal end and a distal end moveable between a retracted position and an extended position. The guides are continually biased toward the retracted position. A first anchor interconnects the distal ends of the guides and a second anchor interconnects the proximal ends. At least one stake is connected to each of the anchors for penetrating the surface to retain the guides outstretched in the extended position against the bias toward the retracted position.

[0008] Accordingly, the subject invention overcomes the limitations of the related art by providing a training device featuring recoiling guides that are continually biased toward a retracted position, but can nonetheless be maintained in an outstretched, extended position without recoiling to the retracted position. This is achieved by mounting anchors between both the proximal ends and distal ends of the guides. Each anchor has pivoting stakes that can be inserted into the surface upon which the device is placed, thereby overcoming the bias of the guides toward the retracted position and maintaining the guides in the extended position.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] Other advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the

following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

[0010] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a training device in accordance with the subject invention with the guides placed in an extended position and the anchors rotated to the anchor position;

[0011] Figure 2 is a perspective view of a training device according to Figure 1 with the guides placed in the retracted position and the anchors rotated to the release position; and

[0012] Figure 3 is an exploded perspective view of a training device according to Figure 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] Referring now to the Figures, wherein like numerals indicate like or corresponding parts throughout the several views, a training device for putting a golf ball on a surface is shown generally at **10** in Figure 1. The training device **10** includes a pair of spaced guides **12**. Each guide **12** has a proximal end **14** and a distal end **16**. Although each guide **12** is moveable between a retracted position and an extended position, both guides **12** are continually biased toward the retracted position. Each of the guides 12 includes a strip or tape having opposing faces 17. The strip extends in a plane generally parallel to the surface and inhibits or prevents lateral or buckling movement of the guide 12 when the guide 12 is in the extended position. The device 10 also includes a housing 18 within which the guides 12 are received. Specifically, each guide 12 is received within one of a pair of

housings 18A or 18B. Each housing 18A and 18B also includes a lock assembly 19. Each lock assembly 19 is movable between an unlocked position to allow non-interfering movement of the guide 12 relative to the housing 18A or 18B within which the guide 12 is positioned, and a locked position in which the corresponding guide 12 is releasably locked in the extended position. This permits use of the device 10 indoors or on any other non-penetrable surface.

[0014] While each housing 18A and 18B shown in the Figures defines an enclosure within which a respective one of the guides 12 is received, the housing 18 may be any structure suitable for receiving or otherwise supporting and coiling the retractable guide 12, and need not completely enclose the retracted guide 12. Alternatively, each housing 18A and 18B and corresponding retractable guide 12 utilized in the device 10 may be a conventional, retractable measuring tape.

[0015] The guides **12** are interconnected by first and second anchors, **20** and **22**, respectively. The first anchor **20** is rotatably mounted between the distal ends **16** of the guides **12** using end caps **23**. Each end cap **23** is carried by one of the distal ends **16** and defines a first hole **24**. The first anchor **20** has a first rod **26** with respective first and second ends **27** and **28**. A second hole **30** is defined in each of the first and second ends **27** and **28**. A mounting pin **32** is disposed in each of a pair of the first and second holes **24** and **30**, which in turn mounts the first anchor **20** for rotational movement relative to the guides **12**.

[0016] The second anchor **22** has a second rod **38** with a first end **40** and a second end **42**, respectively. A hole **43** is defined in each of the ends **40** and **42**. A mounting pin **44** is connected to each housing **18A** and **18B**, and is disposed in one of the holes **43**, thereby rotatably mounting the second anchor **22** between the housings **18A** and **18B**.

[0017] The training device **10** also includes at least one stake **46** connected to each of the anchors **20** and **22**. Specifically, two spaced stakes **46** are connected to each of the first and second rods **24** and **38**. The stakes **46** are used for penetrating the surface upon which the device **10** is positioned to retain the guides **12** outstretched in the extended position against the bias toward the retracted position.

[0018] Each stake **46** is integrally formed with the first rod **24** or second rod **38** upon which the stake **46** is positioned, and extends transversally away from the same at a perpendicular angle thereto. The manner in which the pairs of stakes **46** are connected to the respective first and second rods **24** and **38** gives the first rod **24** and the stakes **46** integrally formed therewith a shape identical to that of the integrally formed second rod **38** and stakes **46**. Thus, the first anchor **20** and second anchor **22** are identically shaped.

[0019] The manner in which the first and second rods **24** and **38** interconnect the guides **12** permits each rod **24** and **38** to rotate relative to the guides **12** between an anchor position and a release position. When the first rod **24** and second rod **38** are in the anchor position, the stakes **46** integrally formed therewith are positioned transversely to the guides **12**, which

in turn permits the stakes 46 to be used to anchor the rods 24 and 38 to the surface. In contrast, rotating the rods **24** and **38** to the release position orients the stakes **46** so that the longitudinal axis of each stake **46** extends parallel to the guides **12**. This releases the guides **12** and permits the guides **12** to return to the retracted position recoiled within the housings 18.

[0020] Obviously, many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. The invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described within the scope of the appended claims, The foregoing description of the preferred embodiment of the invention and the best mode for practicing the invention are provided for the purpose of illustration only and not for the purpose of limitation -- the invention being defined by the claims.